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21 March 1968

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: M-14 Discussion with General Wheeler**

25X1 1. At 1015 on Thursday, 21 March, General Wheeler held a meeting in his office to discuss our M-14 proposition. He had with him, on the military side, Lt. General John C. Meyer (the J-3), Vice Admiral L. Ensey (the J-4), Major General DePuy (the SACSA) and Colonel Edmunds (one of the Chairman's staff assistants). I had [redacted] with me.

2. My basic pitch was that in the course of developmental activity keyed to parochial Agency interests, we had come across something that not only seemed to meet our parochial requirements but also had possible wider utility and might be of benefit to the total US military effort in Vietnam. I made it very clear that we were neither trying to poach on military preserves nor claiming that we had invented something in the back room that the entire ordnance establishment had overlooked.

25X1 3. I opened the session by explaining that early last fall a general concern about the extent to which Agency-directed paramilitary assets in South Vietnam and Laos were being (or likely to be) out-gunned by their Communist opponents equipped with the AK-47's had led me to task [redacted] with the requirement of coming up with an assault weapon that could solve this problem. Our own particular requirements severely restricted the solutions capable of meeting them. Since calibre .30 ammunition was no longer in quantity production and since the Agency did not have the funds to go into large scale manufacture, [redacted] had to confine himself to a calibre of ammunition that was already being produced. This directed his attention to the 7.62 NATO round. Since the personnel assets we were dealing with were slight in stature and woefully deficient in education, we had to have a weapon of low recoil that would not require elaborate first-echelon maintenance. The maintenance problem, coupled with the problem of limited availability directed [redacted] away from the M-16 and caused him to focus his attention on the possibilities of modifying the M-14.

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4. The problem with the M-14, of course, was recoil, which minimized its effectiveness as an automatic weapon even for full-sized US troops, let alone 90-pound Vietnamese. Through his contacts at [redacted] however, [redacted] was aware of developmental work that had been done in 1966 and 1967 on a new 7.62 round for the M-14 which used a 90 grain bullet instead of the 150 grain bullet employed in the Army's present standard M-80 ball issue. The lighter weight bullet attenuated the recoil problem and the ballistic characteristics of this bullet compared most favorably with those of the bullet used in the M-16. I pointed out that as we understood the case, this new M-14 round had been developed by [redacted] as a possible "training round" and that the concept had been more or less shelved because it was felt there was little point in training troops on one kind of ammunition and then issuing them another kind for field use which would cause the weapon to behave in an appreciably different fashion. What [redacted] had done was to explore the possibilities of this new round with a 90 grain bullet for actual combat rather than training purposes. [redacted] had discovered that by employing this round, and by modifying the standard shooting positions in a manner easily teachable to a trained or even untrained weapons handler, a dramatic improvement was made in the accuracy (and, hence, utility) of the M-14 as an automatic assault weapon.

5. I then brought out a set of excellent charts prepared by our graphics people which illustrated [redacted] new shooting positions and the results of comparative testing of the M-14 with the old (M-80) ammunition, the M-16, the AK-47, and the M-14 with the new (90 grain) ammunition. After running through the charts I concluded by stating that we felt this modification of the M-14 was probably the solution to our problem and might be useful to the military services, particularly with regard to re-equipping popular and regional forces in Vietnam.

6. General Wheeler was obviously intrigued and impressed. He asked a number of technical questions, all of which [redacted] fielded most skillfully and effectively. It was obvious from [redacted] answers that he had a complete grasp of all relevant details and our military audience was obviously impressed with his professional ordnance skill.

7. General Wheeler stated that the concept we had proposed had great potential merit. He told Admiral Ensey to get to work on this immediately and asked both General Meyer and General DePuy to keep themselves abreast of developments. General Wheeler suggested, quite firmly, that Admiral Ensey contact Army DESOPS and DESLOG as soon as possible and arrange for them to receive the same briefing. He asked if I would be willing to make the services

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of my staff available on this exercise and I, of course, assured him we would be delighted to do anything we could to help. General Wheeler said that he was sure I would be contacted very soon on this matter.

8. After the session broke up I exchanged a couple of private words with General Wheeler, reiterating in a low key that we had no desire to poach on military preserves but simply felt that we had come up with something he might find useful. He assured me that he welcomed our cooperation and was most grateful for it.

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

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